

Empowering Students to Solve Local Problems: Adapting Materials with Service Learning

During this session, participants will:

- explore the concept of Service Learning as a teaching strategy that promotes meaningful experiential learning through community service and reflective classroom activities
- consider ways to use adapted materials in local environments to examine regional real-world problems
- learn specific strategies and classroom activities that use the Service Learning framework to foster critical thinking, problem-solving, and civic engagement



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Questions to Ponder

- Why should teachers empower their students to solve local problems?
- How can English language teachers adapt materials to help students address problems in their community?
- What is **Service Learning** and how can it promote problem-solving and civic engagement in the classroom?
- How can we incorporate language learning activities into Service Learning projects?





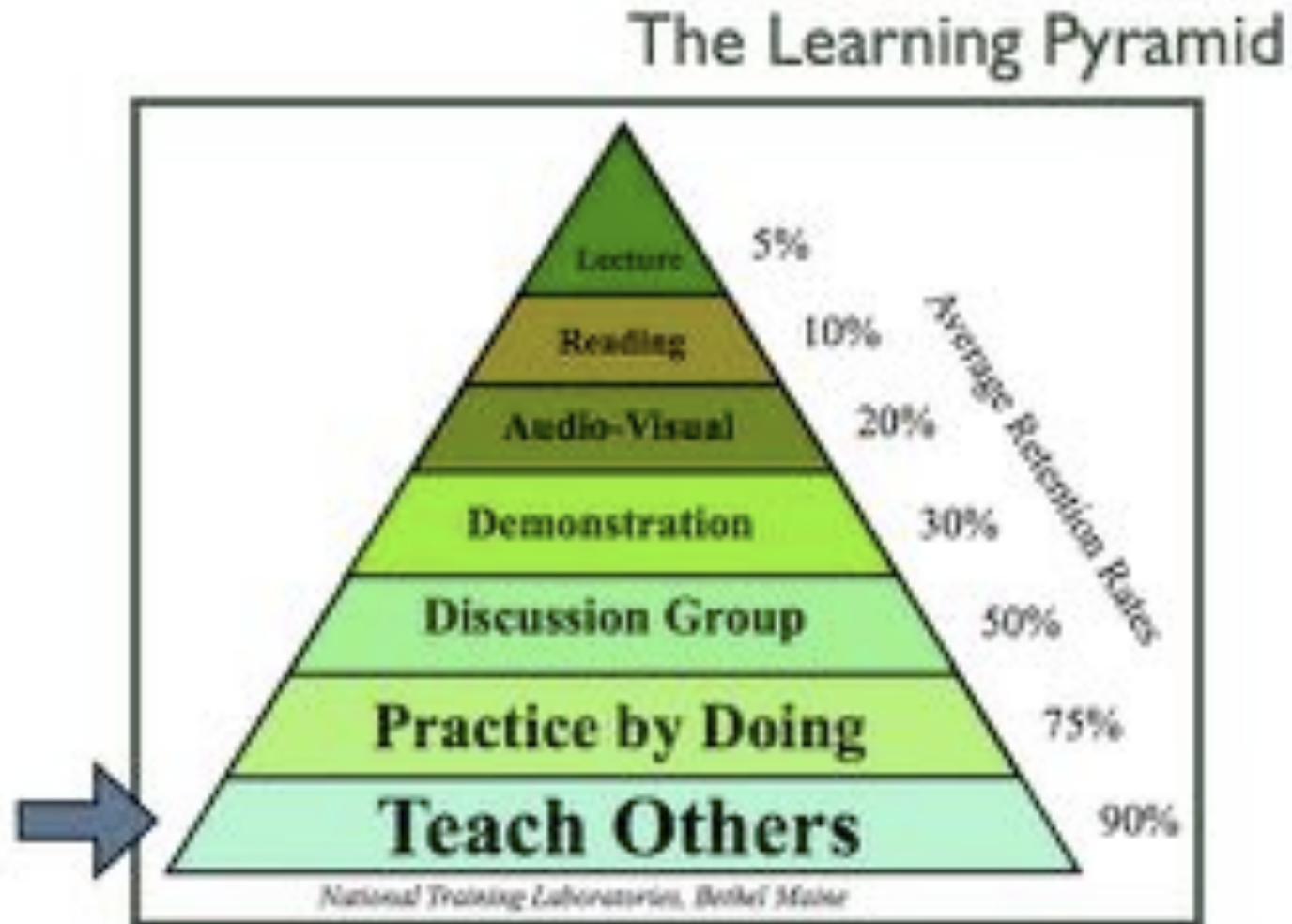
What is Service
Learning?



Have you heard of Service Learning before?

What do you already know about Service Learning?

Service Learning
is a form of
experiential
education that
allows students
to learn by
doing.



Definitions of Service Learning



Service Learning is “a form of **experiential education** where learning occurs through a **cycle of action and reflection** as students... seek to achieve real objectives for the **community** and deeper understanding and skills for **themselves.**” (Janet S. Eyler and Dwight E. Giles, Jr.)

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/teaching-through-community-engagement/>

According to the National Service Learning Clearinghouse...

“Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction to:

- **enrich the learning experience,**
- **teach civic responsibility, and**
- **strengthen communities.”**

How can we as language teachers incorporate language development activities into Service Learning?

What are some language activities that your students could do as part of Service Learning projects?



**Service Learning is
a teaching and
learning strategy**

practice

approach

process

technique



(a carefully planned process
developed by the
teacher
with
community
partners)



Integrating meaningful community service



What are some examples of meaningful community service that you and your students could do in your communities?



SERVICE LEARNING

(Some examples of *meaningful* community service)

- Picking up trash to clean up the local environment
- Planting trees in community spaces
- Working in local community organizations to meet needs that they identify
- Organizing health awareness and/or environmental awareness campaigns
- Assisting the elderly around the house or in the community
- Helping younger school children at school or in after school programs or clubs

**with instruction
and reflection**





What questions
would you ask
your students while
participating in
service learning
activities?



Some examples of instruction and reflection

–**What?** Report the facts and events of an experience, objectively.

–**So What?** Analyze the experience.

–**Now What?** Consider the future impact of the experience on the student and the community.



Important to note:

Service Learning can be adapted for all levels of English language learners



- English language teachers can pair community service activities with beginning level English language assignments that match the course content and curriculum for lower level English language courses.

Sample Reflection Questions and Sentence Starters for Students

- What is the impact of the Service Learning experience on your life?
- What did you learn about solving problems because of doing Service Learning?
- How did your community change because of your volunteer work?

*** * * * ***

- By doing Service Learning, I now understand...
- I see that Service Learning benefits my community because...
- Working to solve community problems together is a good idea because...

Examples of instruction and reflection activities

- Group discussions
- Creative projects
- Journals
- Multimedia class presentations
- Reports and essays
- Videos
- Blogs
- Community events
- Case studies
- Reflective readings



**to enrich
the
learning
experience**



How does
Service Learning
benefit students?





teach

civic responsibility

strengthen communities



Here is a short YouTube clip that elaborates on the definition of Service Learning from Learn and Serve America



(<https://youtu.be/XBnZgVC2YW0>)

Having examined the concept of Service Learning as a teaching strategy, the question remains:

→ How can English language teachers use Service Learning with adapted materials in local environments to examine regional real-world problems?



Making a Plan for Service Learning





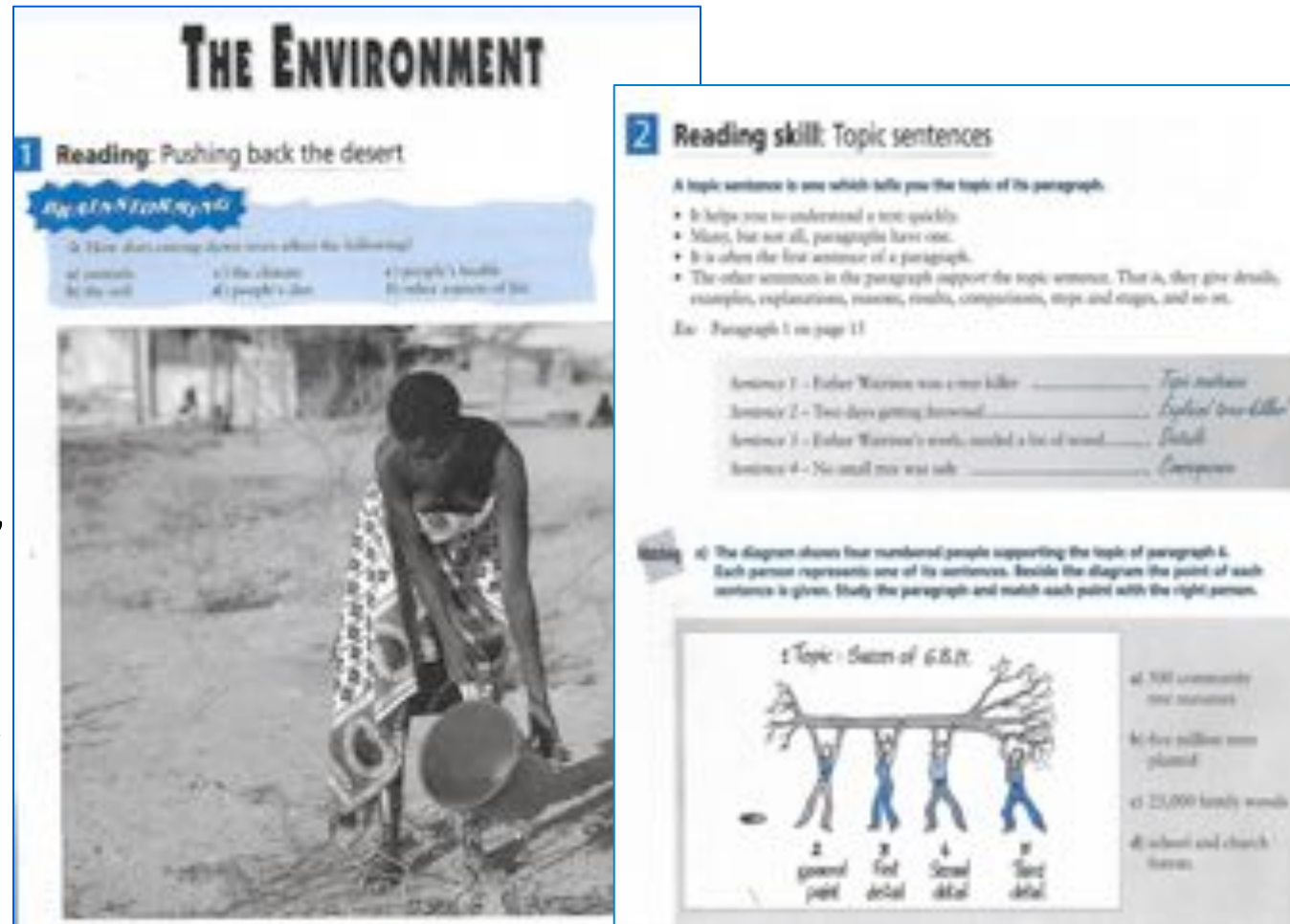
Service Learning Project Check List

- ☒ Preparation + Planning
- ☒ Volunteer Service Activities
- ☒ Reflection + Application
- ☒ Evaluation + Recognition

One Example from Benin, West Africa, of “Empowering High School Students to Solve Local Problems with Service Learning”



Mr. Hilarion Vegba
is an English Teacher,
High School Principal,
and former
Humphrey Fellow at
Vanderbilt University



He suggests using
the environment
theme from
English
language
curriculum and
the official
textbook for the
final year of high
school

Local Problem

Desertification is caused from cutting down trees to make charcoal to sell and burn for cooking food.



Adapting materials

- Using the regular English language course textbook and curriculum about the environment + adding extra discussion and vocabulary activities
- Having students do research about the local tree and environmental situation



Adapting materials

Finding an expert who can share information about desertification, tree cutting, charcoal production and selling, alternative cooking methods





Volunteer Service Learning activity with the whole class:

- Visiting the tree nursery operated by the Forestry Department to learn more and help water, care for and tree seedlings
- Growing seedlings and planting them where needed

Additional instruction and reflection about the Service Learning activity

- Doing a writing assignment about the service activity and its lasting benefits
- Making posters to illustrate the tree cutting and desertification problem and show some solutions
- Creating group presentations about the environment service activity to do in English language classes with younger students



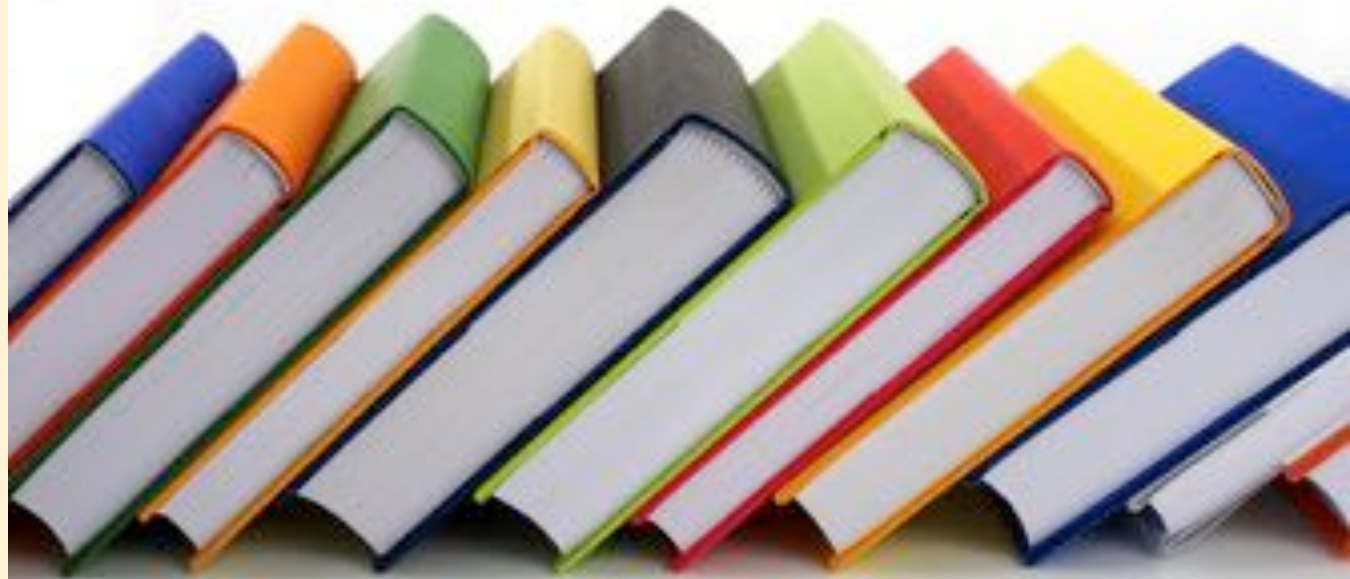
Things to Consider



Practical Steps for English Language Teachers to Implement Service Learning

1. Examine topics found in your course's English teaching curriculum
2. Brainstorm possible community service volunteer activities that match curriculum topics
3. Contact potential community organizations
4. Develop a step-by-step plan for classroom instruction, service volunteer activities, and post-service reflection and assignments

Examine topics found in your course's English teaching curriculum, (including unit themes, textbooks, and supplemental materials) to find topics that relate to issues or areas of potential need in the local environment.



What content themes or language topics from your English language curriculum would work well to do service learning projects with your students?



Brainstorm possible community service

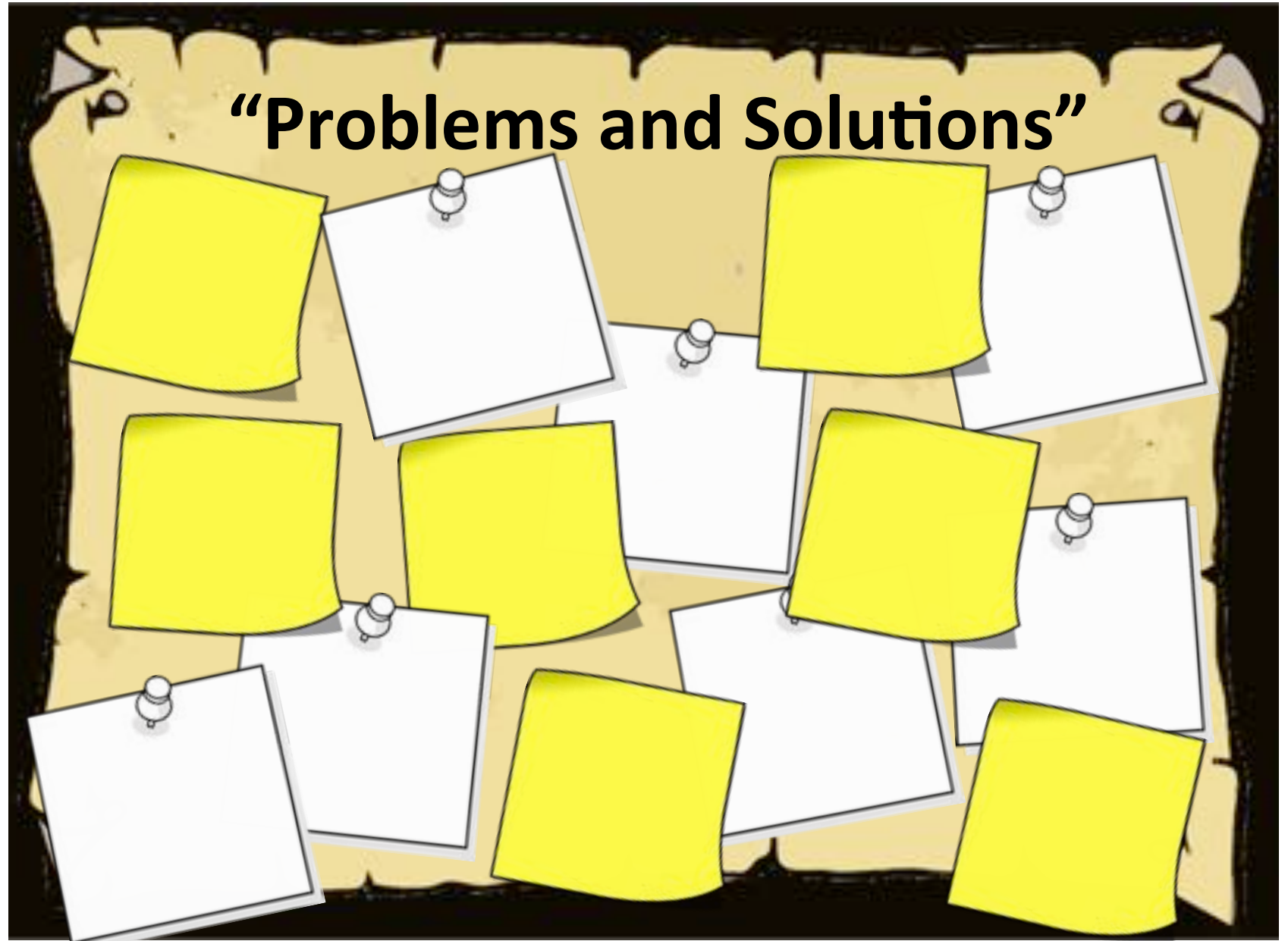
VOLUNTEER

**activities that match the
topics from the curriculum.**



Sample Class Brainstorming Activity

In small groups, students use large sheets of paper (or write on the blackboard) to compile class lists of local problems and potential solutions



Contact potential community organizations
to learn more about the real needs of the organizations
where students can do service activities.



What organizations in your community could you partner with?

Some examples might include: schools, places that provide activities for children, environmental organizations, civic organizations, social centers.



Develop a step-by-step plan for classroom instruction, service volunteer activities, and





SELF REFLECTION

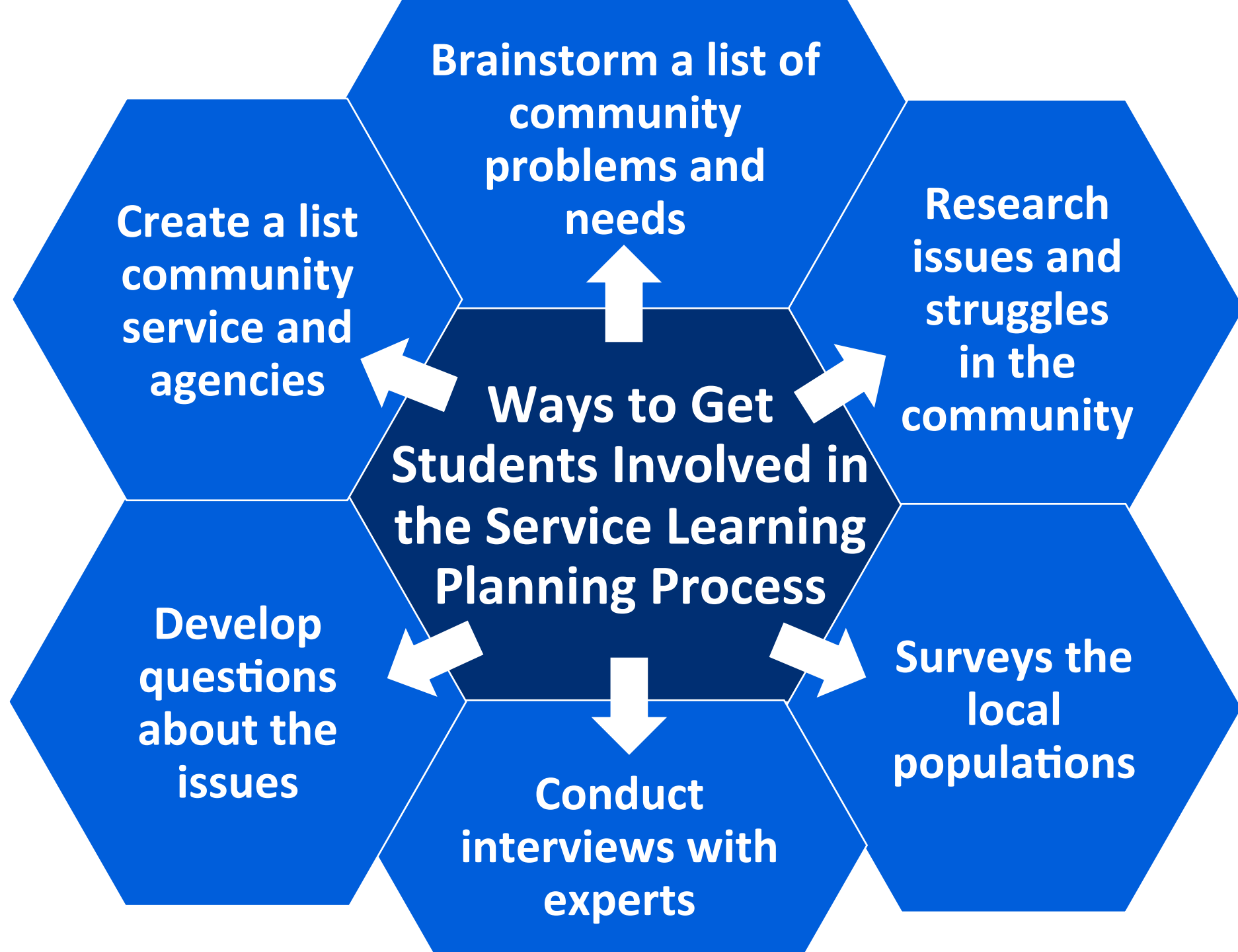
post-service reflection and assignments that concisely connect the volunteer activity to the course curriculum.

**How does Service Learning empower students?
How can teachers get students involved in the process?**



CIVIC community ENGAGEMENT Service





Service Learning Planning Guide for English Instructors

	<u>Pre-service</u>	<u>During service</u>	<u>Post-service</u>
Local problems and possible solutions	Brainstorm solutions	Observe solutions in practice	Evaluate solutions viewed
English language curriculum connections	Introduce key terms and language concepts	Remind students of connections during service	Evaluate use of key terms and concepts in assignments
Community and school partners	Compile a list of potential partners	Coordinate with partners for service	Send thank you letters to partners
Instruction and assignments	Identify possible class assignments	Provide student support for work	Collect and correct homework
Reflection activities	Develop thoughtful reflection work	Assign reflection homework	Collect, evaluate, and share work
Evaluation	Design evaluations	Monitor service	Improve for future

Question for Reflection

How is Service Learning an effective strategy to use in an English language class?

What do you think?

Other Questions to Consider

- How can Service Learning promote interaction and meaningful experiential learning?
- How can English language curriculum and textbooks be used with Service Learning?
- How does Service Learning compel teachers and students to examine important local problems and take actions to address those problems?

More Questions



- What specific strategies and steps are needed for service learning in your class
- Why are community partner so important when undertaking service learning?

Final Question

How does service learning provide a framework to foster critical thinking and problem-solving and civic engagement for students?



A Final Thought



“With project-based learning (and service-learning), students learn by designing and constructing actual solutions to real life problems.”

- George Lucas, Hollywood Director and Chairman of the George Lucas

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Thank you!

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